

Stop Tick-And Mosquito-Borne Diseases

FIGHT THE BITE: STOP TICK-AND MOSQUITO-BORNE DISEASES

DOVER – One of the best things about summer weather is more time outside. The Division of Public Health urges people to get active, enjoy the outdoors, and remember to protect themselves from tick and mosquito bites. Tick and mosquito bites can cause serious illnesses, and a few small steps, such as using insect repellent, can make a big difference.

In Delaware, the most common tick-borne disease is Lyme disease, which is transmitted to humans by the bite of infected deer ticks. There were 418 Lyme disease cases in Delaware in 2014. Rocky Mountain spotted fever is diagnosed much less frequently in the First State with only 24 cases in 2014.

Symptoms of Lyme disease can include a “bull’s-eye” rash (seen in approximately half of Lyme disease cases in Delaware), fever, fatigue, headache, and muscle and joint aches. Chronic joint, heart, and neurological problems may occur. It usually takes 24-36 hours of attachment before a tick transmits a disease. Anyone bitten by a tick should monitor their health closely, and contact a physician if symptoms develop.

Mosquitoes can carry West Nile virus (WNV), Eastern equine encephalitis (EEE), and several other diseases that cause brain inflammation (encephalitis) and can be fatal to humans and animals. Infected mosquitoes transmit these diseases through their bites.

Approximately 80 percent of human WNV infections are mild and cause no apparent symptoms. The other 20 percent develop a mild illness (West Nile fever), which includes fever, body and

muscle aches, headache, nausea, vomiting, and a rash. A small percentage of patients, usually the elderly, develop severe neurological disease that results in meningitis or encephalitis.

DPH recommends these precautions to stay safe:

TICK PREVENTION

- Wear light-colored clothing to allow you to see ticks easily.
- Wear long sleeves and long pants, and tuck pant legs into socks.
- Apply tick repellents. Repellents containing permethrin can be sprayed on boots and clothing and will last for several days. Repellents containing DEET can be applied to the skin but will last only a few hours before reapplication is necessary. Use insect repellent containing less than 50 percent DEET for adults. Use repellent containing less than 30 percent DEET on children. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that repellents with DEET should not be used on infants less than two months old.
- After being outdoors, check for ticks on yourself and your children (especially the head area), and pets, which should be treated with tick and flea prevention.

TICK REMOVAL

- Avoid removing ticks with bare hands to prevent the tick's fluids from getting on your skin. Use fine-tipped tweezers, shielding fingers with a tissue, paper towel, or rubber gloves.
- Grasp the tick close to the skin surface and pull upward steadily and evenly.
- Dispose of the tick by flushing it. Cleanse the site of the tick bite with an antiseptic or soap and water, and wash your hands.

MOSQUITO PREVENTION

- When outside, wear shoes, long-sleeved shirts, and pants. Mosquito netting can protect one's face and neck, and infants

in carriages, strollers, and playpens. Mosquitoes are most active at dusk and during the early morning hours.

- Mosquito repellents containing DEET can be applied to the skin but will last only a few hours before reapplication is necessary. Use insect repellent containing less than 50 percent DEET for adults. Use repellent containing less than 30 percent DEET on children. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends using insect repellents containing 10 percent DEET. AAP recommends that repellents with DEET should not be used on infants less than two months old.

- Prevent mosquitoes from entering the house by using screens and keeping windows and doorways tightly sealed. Mosquitoes prefer shallow water and tall vegetation. Eliminate standing water in your yard by changing birdbath water weekly, regularly draining pet dishes and plant pot saucers, and checking gutters, pool covers, and tarps for standing water. Store buckets, wheelbarrows, and wading pools upside down. Keep grass mowed.

For more information, visit www.cdc.gov and <http://dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/epi/lyme.html>.

Delaware Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, drink almost no sugary beverages.

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